December 5, 2003

Fellow Multi-Modal Transportation Task Force Members,

Over the last several meetings, we've received a wealth of information from a variety of presenters that should help inform our discussions and recommendations. It is now our task to step back from looking at individual components and to do our best to thoughtfully look at the larger picture. The greater part of the information we've received has focused on special transit services. While that information has been helpful and necessary, as has all the information received, I would propose that we set aside it aside for the moment. I believe that to *not* do so is to obscure the task before us as articulated in the Multi-modal Transportation Plan.

> *"The primary focus of this study is to identify realistic means for expanding travel, mobility, and accessibility opportunities within the City and County by supporting and promoting alternative mode of transportation. This includes a fuller understanding of the relationship that land use policy, growth planning, and design standards play in furthering the ultimate success of alternative transportation modes."*

The charge (above) does not suggest that our primary purpose for meeting is to "fix" current problems, (although we may indeed offer useful solutions as part of what we do) but to plan for the future. with the understanding that development, land use, government, businesses and so on are in something of a symbiotic or parasitic (as the case may be) relationship.

I do not believe that anyone has come to the table with the interests they represent, including their own personal opinions, thinking that the automobile will fall from its pinnacle of dominance. It won't, not in our lifetime and not without a significant shift in societal values.   With that as a given, let's move on.

At the risk of pointing out the obvious, I'd like to us to keep in mind one other thing.

Cities are like a three-legged stool. Cities, towns, villages, exist because of three "legs:" 1) Economics, 2) Politics and 3) Transportation. The interplay of these three elements largely determines the shape of cities and places and the nature of their personalities and Lincoln is no exception.

Cities come into being in a specific **location** because of the potential to develop or exploit a resource for *economic* gain. (In Lincoln's case, salt played a role.) How people move around (*transportation*) determines the physical **shape** of the community and *politics i.e.,* government, determines the **type** of transportation; indeed, the consultant from SRF pointed this out to us in commenting on how responsive the City has been to demands for more parking garages, street widening and so on.

Among the pieces of information we have received is that by 2050 Lincoln/Lancaster County will likely grow to a total population of 525,000 persons. That is a mind-numbing number and it is difficult to imagine what Lincoln/Lancaster County will look like, what kinds and ages of people will live here and what kinds of businesses, educational systems and cultural venues will exist in 47 years.

Nevertheless, the discussions and recommendations we make now can have a significant hand in designing the Lincoln that will exist.   Lincoln in 47 years will not simply be a bigger sized version of the status quo. A city of 500,000[1] is much different from a city of 225,000.

To inform us about what Lincoln/Lancaster County in 2050 might look like, we need to be provided some information about the projected demographic make up of Lincoln, *e.g.,* the number of seniors, children, school age children/families, college age/young adults and so on. It would also be helpful to have some projections on the likely size of our workforce, types of industries and services. Information and models once available from UNL's Business Research Center would be useful.

However, with the Center's closure, it may be difficult to obtain but it is important to try to obtain such information for it surely will help inform our discussions. We need this and our thoughts about what we want Lincoln to be like in the future.

Kent has pointed out that a large part of our future deliberations should be devoted to thinking about alternative futures. Keeping in mind the three-legged stool one of several key questions we must ask is:

> **"What kind of "environment" do we want to have in which to live?** That is — **"The conditions under which any person or thing lives or is developed, the sum-total of influences which modify and determine the development of life or character"** *(Oxford English Dictionary).* In other words: ***"What do we want Lincoln to look like?"***

I've been thinking about the focus of this study. If Lincoln becomes a large urban city over the 50 years, what will our neighborhoods to look like? What impact will there be on property values? What types of businesses and people we might attract as Lincoln becomes urban and larger. Research and observation already tell us that property values are affected by what surrounds or is nearby to a property whether it is a home or business. In addition, it goes without much comment that people's behavior is influenced by their "environment."

To-date Lincoln has prided itself on being friendly, having neighborhoods conducive to the elusive concept of "neighborliness" and so on. Cities, like people have personalities and thus attract different kinds of people and businesses. Whom do we want living in Lincoln, what kinds of jobs and industries do we want? What do we want to be known for? What kinds of "community" values do we want to preserve, develop or prevent the development of?

I'm going to go out on a limb and plainly put my primary interest on the table to hopefully start the discussions we must have off in the right direction.

What my "interest" has been all along is not so much in a specific type of transportation but that we move from talking specifically about special services transportation, buses, taxis, light rail or whatever, to asking:

> "How can we make all the parts, (the different types of transportation services) more integrated, collaborative and "reasonably" cost efficient with the end goal one of ensuring that

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[1] Cities with populations of 500,000+ population include: Amherst, NY, Atlanta, and GA. Bellevue, WA. Charlotte, N.C., Flint, MI. Fremont, CA., Gary, IN, Irvine, CA, Jackson, MS, Kansas City, MO, Miami-Dade, FL, Nashville-Davidson, TN, New Orleans, LA Newark, NJ, Portland, Ore., Provo, UT, Santa Clara, CA, Simi Valley, CA, St. Louis, MO, Sterling Heights, MI, Sunnyvale, CA, Tampa, FL, and Thousand Oaks, CA

ANYONE/EVERYONE in Lincoln can get from point A to point B,
C, or D in a safe. reasonably timely and efficient manner?"

My concern is that we're looking at the "trees" of bus, car, special services etc and not asking the "right" questions -- I haven't much of a clue about what questions should be but I know what questions I have.

Depending on how the Lincoln develops, it may continue to be a community of diverse age groups, minorities and young families/professionals -- or we may become a community where the greater share of the community is "eligible for membership in AARP" or has Medicare as some Iowa and Florida communities h have already become.

All the long term planning and prognosticating in the world can't fully or accurately predict what will indeed happen but we do have some small amount of power to guide how things develop.

With that said, I have hoped we'd do what we could within the confines of the study to think imaginatively about what do we want TOMORROW, not so much, "How do we address the NOW problems?   We sometimes appear to be designing our future as though we are not going to age or have a proportionally smaller workforce fueling the local economy and supporting a proportionally larger elderly population.

For the purpose of discussion it would be helpful to think as if tomorrow there were going to be no funding for any of the current systems, *i.e., existing traffic/roads, sidewalk, trails, bike path plans, special transit services, taxis or Star Tran and the UNL Shuttle,* but that there would be new funding for a system that was built with the following goals and objectives.

1. Getting anyone/everyone in Lincoln, where they want to be in a safe, reasonably timely and efficient manner.

2. The structure is collaborative, integrated and flexible.

3. The structure leverages as much as possible, the available (multi-source) dollars for funding and operation.

4. The structure is designed, in so far as possible to ensure that the Multitudinous governing regulations are as little of a hindrance to:
    a. Efficiency
    b. Cost effectiveness and;
    c. Does not impede the goal of SERVICE.

Other questions I'm asking about the future in the context of our purpose include:

If I choose to remain in Lincoln for the remainder of my life, what kind of people, neighborhoods, arts/recreation, transportation formats/services, and jobs/industries do I want to see?

What would make/has made Lincoln an unattractive place for me to live/work now or in the future?

What kinds of transportation modes/services do I want to have access to as a non-driver or others I depend on, can't drive?

What one thing would I like to have some influence on to change for the better or to eliminate in terms of land use, transportation or development?

Susan Dunn
MMT Task Force Member